

Hogan-Flair in 4.126 Million

A New Record!!!

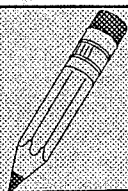
MATWATCH '94

AUGUST-EARLY SEPT.

VOL. 2, NO. 8

Steve

BEVERLY



If one were to scan the tail end of last week's forums on the America Online and Internet computer services, one would have the distinct impression the most recent *Clash of the Champions* was one of the worst productions in the history of modern man.

"Who booked this crap?" demanded one Internet subscriber. "Isn't it nice the way Ric Flair's career is going down in shambles?" quipped another. Out of 158 messages on Internet by Friday, 152 were trashing the *Clash*.

To be frank, a lot of this is coming from traditional Flair fans who can't stand to see Hulk Hogan take over on Flair's home turf. This is an analogy comparable to one I've used before. In the 1960s, Jack Nicklaus was one of the most hated golfers on the PGA tour because he began to regularly beat Arnold Palmer, still arguably the most popular name in the history of the links. While the Golden Bear enjoys international respect today, it's still unsafe to provoke an argument with a soldier of Arnie's Army—and I was and am one of them.

From a purely business standpoint, I am in full agreement with those who suggest the most intense buildup for the cage match finale in October would have resulted with Flair regaining the belt.

However, despite widespread speculation in the two weeks leading to the TBS special and recent Flair bookings of losses in arenas, I never had any doubt Hogan would retain the belt, even with a heavy injury angle. Why? Did anyone honestly think Hogan would be this generous on live television in what would turn out to be the most-watched single mat event in the history of basic cable?

Despite suggestions in the wrestling media of the friendship of Hogan and Flair prior to Terry's joining WCW, the ultimate clashing of egos of these fortyish veterans suggests to me Hogan will never drop that strap back to Flair to prove the ultimate point which many viewers wanted settled five years ago.

What's my take on the show's production? First, it appeared to me to show a huge lack of originality, what with the enormous number of "we've-seen-that-before" angles and characters, some of which were absolutely tasteless.

If we had been flies on the wall in the CNN Center, we probably would have heard a conversation like this....."The Nancy Kerrigan attack was in all the headlines. Let's parody that one.....We did our last four rating when we sent Sting to the hospital before he took on Rick Rude. Let's do that again, only we'll follow Hogan to the hospital, rather than just have him

(Continued on Page 2)

Second Most-Watched TBS Special Ever

Eric Bischoff should buy a Hulk Hogan wax figure and bow to it daily. Hogan is making Eric resemble a genius.

The Aug. 24 Hogan-Ric Flair main event on TBS' *Clash of the Champions* has become the most-watched wrestling match in the history of cable television. Hogan vs. Flair skyrocketed to a 6.7 rating and 11.3 per cent share of audience. The rating/share figures are only enough for fifth place on the all-time list.

But Hogan-Flair was seen in 4.126 million homes, besting the 3.8 million for both Flair-Lex Luger and Sting-Black Scorpion in Sept. 1990.

The special, boosted by two weeks of massive hype on the Superstation, launched with a 2.6 rating at 8:05,

stronger than the last three outings which opened under a 2, and increased audience in all but the 9 p.m. and 9:45 p.m. quarter-hours.

Clash was seen over the two-and-a-half hours in an average of 2.774 million homes, 50,000 off the all-time high of 2.779 million watching the fall 1990 special.

The August event was up 18 per cent over last year's. But Hogan-Flair increased the rating over the 1993 Flair-Davey Boy Smith main event by 49 per cent.

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THE BIG 5

Hogan vs. Flair, Aug. 1994, 4.126 million.

Sting vs. Black Scorpion, Sept. 1990, 3.8 million.

Flair vs. Luger, Sept. 1990, 3.8 million.

Flair vs. Funk, Nov. 1989, 3.54 million.

Royal Rumble I, Jan. 1988, 3.34 million.

Hogan-Flair Tops Audience Record

(Continued from Page 1)

During the week prior to the show, TBS executives had declined to predict a rating but WCW brass were privately forecasting a 4, which had not been achieved since the Sting-Rick Rude U.S. title bout and Ricky Steamboat/Dustin Rhodes world tag championship win in Nov. 1990.

Even the critically-panned Antonio Inoki-Steve Regal bout snared a 4.6/7.5 and the Rhodes Family-Bunkhouse Buck/Terry Funk confrontation averaged a 4.7/7.5 for its mid-show slot.

RATINGS GREAT 8

1. Royal Rumble I, Jan. 1988, USA, 8.2/12.
2. Sting-Flair, Apr. 1988, TBS, 7.1/15.
3. Sting-Black Scorpion and Flair-Luger (tie), Sept. 1990, TBS, 6.8/11.4.
5. Hogan-Flair, Aug. 1994, TBS, 6.7/11.3.
6. Mr. Wrestling II-Larry Zbyszko, Feb. 1983, TBS, 6.6/12.
7. Funk-Flair, Nov. 1989, TBS, 6.4/11.
8. Sting-Barry Windham, Sept. 1988, TBS, 6.2/10.4.

At 10 p.m., the pre-match buildup and deliberation over whether Hogan-Flair would actually take place rose to a 5.2/8.7 in 3.2 million homes.

The special did not face late-season baseball competition on ESPN because of the strike and other cable offerings opposite were weak. The only significant drop came at 9 p.m. when television's number one show, *Home Improvement*, began on ABC. At the top of the hour, the special fell from a 4.0/7.1 to 3.8/6.5.

The dramatic turnaround revived a troubled series. Only 15 months ago, *Clash* had been proposed for cancellation by TBS after a June 1993 show led by Flair's return to a WCW ring drew an all-time low 2.6 rating.

The last three specials failed to even top USA Network's *Monday Night Raw* in the same week the two shows aired. The June *Clash*, in which Hogan became involved at the close of a Sting-Flair unification world title

match, mustered only a 3.0.

TBS executives were said to be "extremely pleased" with the rating and are hoping for similar magic in November. But no commitment has been made to extending the late fall event to two-and-a-half hours.

The 6.7 also proved the drawing power of Hogan is still strong and will almost cement his being re-signed by World Championship Wrestling for 1995. Concerns were raised after Hogan's initial spring appearances averaged a 2.2 on WCW's Saturday night show and his highest TBS mark had been 2.7 for his early August live *WCW Main Event* outing.

Ironically, cable viewers came within eight minutes of being denied the main event. Inside sources say at approximately 9:55 p.m., word was sent to the remote truck in Cedar Rapids satellite transmission time would expire within ten minutes. Reportedly, WCW production brass failed to communicate to their distributor of the half-hour extension over the recent two-hour specials. An emergency call was placed to acquire an extra 30 minutes of feed time but a WCW insider says several parties were scrambling to assign blame for the near-snafu—with many fingers being pointed at WCW production vice president David Crockett. Crockett was denying responsibility.

The Real Wrestling Hotline
1-900-909-9030

Steve Beverly

(Continued from Page 1)

call back from the emergency room....More people watched the Black Scorpion than on any other *Clash*, so let's bring that back. We'll put Arn Anderson under the mask, since he's not wrestling, but we'll tell everybody later it was Curt Hennig. Can't miss."

That may not have been the actual conversation but the show appeared as if the crew threw up against the wall every major bit on high-rated specials of the past and revived them. However, one would wish the WCW think tank could have been more innovative than to lampoon the most bizarre and tasteless act in Olympic history.

As for overall production, sloppy is a fairly kind word. In following Hogan to the hospital, this group forgot to budget for adequate lighting. Had this been a Titan angle, you would have seen first-class lighting on the cameras in all locations. WCW chose to use the natural pink lighting outside the hospital which gave the picture a grainy tone.

On top of that, Hogan's attorney Henry Holmes bloopers his way through admitting Bischoff was an executive of the company. "We have spoken to Mr. Bischoff and the others who work for him in WCW and we have been assured Hulk will get the first-available title shot," Holmes said. So if Bischoff is the company boss, why is he holding a microphone in his hand as an interviewer outside the emergency room?

Gene Okerlund and Bobby Heenan were both shining lights on the production with Okerlund properly aghast and intense during the injury angle, interestingly admonishing Greg Gagne and Gary Juster to "do something" when Hogan was on the floor.

However, a major weak link was the play-by-play role. Tony Schiavone, unfortunately, has deteriorated with virtually every major show and this time, he may as well have mailed in his work. At key points, Schiavone appeared disinterested and coasting almost at the level as Jesse Ventura has on recent shows. Clearly, only the stubbornness of Bischoff and WCW president Bill Shaw are keeping Schiavone in the anchor role—though if Bischoff's late history is indicative, a change may mean Eric inserting himself in place of Schiavone, rather than hiring back the best play-by-play man in the industry.

And answer me one question: how could Sherri Martel's shoe be so powerful to break up a reversal of the figure-4 leglock on someone as strong as Hulk Hogan? I always used to ask these questions when J.J. Dillon's shoe was used to win matches for Flair. Put it this way: if women's spike heels have the defensive power of Sherri's, we'd have far less domestic violence by men in America.

Steve Beverly



HEADLINES

Bash Buy-Rate Upped Again

NEW YORK—While final numbers will not be available until mid-September, estimates of the buy-rate for *Bash-at-the-Beach* have been increased to 1.03 per cent.

Buy-ins for the three replays of the July WCW special and slightly-higher reports from major markets have led to an estimate of 247,000 subscribers.

Trade publication *Multichannel News* estimates by the time all figures are in, the special will have grossed \$6.42 million, of which approximately \$2.5 million will go to World Championship Wrestling.

Bischoff Bumps Schiavone in Syndie

ATLANTA—World Championship Wrestling, Inc., executive vice president Eric Bischoff has inserted himself as replacement for Tony Schiavone as anchor commentator of *WCW Worldwide*.

The shift took place Aug. 27. Bischoff told viewers on-air, "If you wonder what's happened to Tony Schiavone, you can see him every week on *WCW Saturday Night*."

The move is not said to be related to any of the behind-the-scenes complaints about Schiavone's performance on the Aug. 24 *Clash of the Champions*.

Bischoff will now appear on three WCW shows per week: *Worldwide* and the TBS and syndicated editions of *WCW Main Event*.

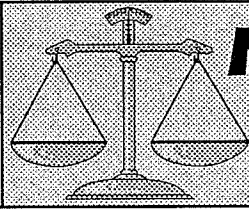
Superstars Now Back on Bird

NEWFOUNDLAND, Canada—*WWF Superstars of Wrestling* is now again available to satellite dish owners.

The Canadian version of the show, *Maple Leaf Wrestling*, is now offered Saturday afternoons at 5 p.m. (EDT) on satellite Anik E-2, channel 20, the Canadian satellite which was revived this summer.

Superstars airs on the NTV channel which serves Newfoundland and Labrador. The show had been bumped from satellite after the Spanish Telemundo network converted to a digital feed in August.

In another schedule note, KMGH, the CBS affiliate in Denver—available to most of the nation by satellite—is relegating *Wrestling Challenge* to a 1 a.m. time slot Sundays (3 a.m. EDT) beginning Sept. 10.



MATWATCH '94 EDITORIALS

ROSS DESERVES THE SHOT

Elsewhere in this issue, one can read of Jim Ross's decision not to stay with the World Wrestling Federation beyond Labor Day because of uncertainties in his work schedule with Titan Sports. The parting is said to be amicable.

Have no fear for Ross. Between his sports/talk radio and regional wrestling work, he will be fine financially. But with a major national mat organization approximately ten miles from the Ross home in Atlanta—and with same said company deeply hurting for a lead play-by-play announcer, the time has come for WCW, president Bill Shaw and executive v.p. Eric Bischoff to lay down two-year-old political differences and call Ross home.

Some of Ross's key political foes are fading. Jesse Ventura, less than tactful on-air in his lampooning of Ross after Ross's departure for the WWF, appears to be marking time until the end of his WCW contract early next year and his petulance over being supplanted by Bobby Heenan is glaring. Tony Schiavone, who lobbied heavily for Ross's axing in early 1993, has continued to deteriorate to the level of perhaps his worst performance ever on the August *Clash of the Champions*.

Bischoff is riding the crest in his exec role as the man who engineered the Hulk Hogan signing. Though he campaigned for Ross's ouster, Bischoff should be shrewd enough to see that move was not a positive one for the company.

Shaw operated for more than a year under the mistaken impression of Ross's disloyalty because Ross would not stay in a syndication sales job and because WCW lost control of Jim's old WSB Radio show in Atlanta last year. Ross had every right to seek alternative employment in his primary talent as an announcer; as for the radio show—the program was owned by WSB-AM, not WCW—which was merely a sponsor.

For months now, the one key element missing from WCW's revived television shows has been the best play-by-play man of this decade. Even though this is a strategy often lacking in pro wrestling, good business should dictate for Messrs. Shaw, Bischoff, and friends to lay down petty differences and bring back Ross.

CLASH CONGRATULATIONS

On the other hand, despite a critical drubbing by analysts and subscribers to computer services, WCW and TBS are to be congratulated for a major comeback in the *Clash of the Champions* series with its 4.5 rating and 7.7 share.

The 4.126 million homes which tuned into the Hulk Hogan-Ric Flair main event may well be a cable television record which will stand years into the future. An estimated nine million people watched the main event.

Virtually all of the rating is attributable to Hogan's revived drawing power and the fact a Hogan-Flair bout had never before been seen live on non-pay television. Once again, even with the sliding viewership for pro wrestling in recent years, *Clash* proved viewers will watch in large numbers if they are given what they want to see.

GIVE US ALL THE FACTS

The recent spate of "interactive" wrestling programs on WCW raises again the issue of whether announced poll results for 900 number call-in surveys are accurate. For years, wrestling organizations have been notorious for sucking in viewer money from polls and merely announcing results to fit desired storylines.

However, with the shift of WCW to monthly live airings of its TBS shows to use the interactive strategy in selecting main events, Turner Broadcasting needs to do more than provide tandem assurance the announced results will be legitimate. The USA Network needs to do likewise with the World Wrestling Federation on any future polls, live or taped, and on any future call-in shows.

In 1958, the television industry suffered a major black eye which led to a federal grand jury and Congressional investigations into its practices. The culprit: quiz show producers who were feeding questions and answers in advance to contestants and staging the shows as if they were pro wrestling bouts. That led to the major networks establishing Standards and Practices departments as safeguards against a repeat of the deceptions.

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THE RATINGS PAGE

CABLE WRESTLING RATINGS

July Avgs.	Rtg/Shr	Homes	June Avg.	'93
Monday Night Raw	3.0/5.1	1.87 mil.	3.2/5.0	2.9/4.8
WCW Sat. Night	2.2/5.8	1.34 mil.	2.1/5.6	2.1/5.5
WCW Main Event	1.9/4.5	1.16 mil.	1.8/4.3	1.9/4.7
WWF All-American	1.9/6.0	1.15 mil.	1.7/5.4	2.3/7.3
WCW Pro	1.3/5.6	827,000	1.5/6.1	1.4/6.3
WWF Mania	1.2/4.1	722,000	1.2/4.3	1.1/3.7

July 30-31	Rating/Share	Total Homes	Year Ago
WCW Sat. Night	2.5/6.3	1.54 million	2.1/5.3
WCW Main Event	2.3/5.0	1.42 million	2.1/4.8
WWF All-American	1.9/6.0	1.18 million	2.2/6.9
WCW Pro*	1.3/5.5	802,000	1.4/6.6
WWF Mania	1.1/3.9	685,000	1.1/4.2

Aug. Avgs.	Rtg/Shr	Homes	Year Ago
Mon. Night Raw	2.9/4.4	1.81 mil.	3.2/5.1
WCW Sat. Night	2.4/5.9	1.48 mil.	2.7/6.8
WCW Main Event	2.3/5.1	1.42 mil.	2.2/4.9
WWF All-American	1.6/5.0	1.00 mil.	2.1/6.0
WCW Pro	1.3/5.6	855,000	1.4/6.4
WWF Mania	1.2/4.1	716,000	1.2/4.8

August 1

Mon. Night Raw**	3.3/5.3	2.05 million	2.9/4.8
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Week Ending Aug. 8

Monday Night Raw	2.9/4.6	1.81 million	3.4/5.5
WCW Main Event**	2.7/6.3	1.67 million	2.1/4.7
WCW Sat. Night**	2.5/6.4	1.55 million	2.5/6.1
WWF All-American	1.6/5.4	995,000	2.2/6.4
WCW Pro	1.0/4.4	627,000	1.2/5.6
WWF Mania	1.0/4.0	625,000	1.3/5.2

Week Ending Aug. 15

Mon. Night Raw**	2.9/4.5	1.82 million	3.2/5.1
WCW Sat. Night	2.5/6.0	1.54 million	2.6/6.3
WCW Main Event	2.2/4.9	1.36 million	2.2/4.9
WWF All-American	1.7/5.2	1.06 million	2.3/6.4
WWF Mania	1.2/4.0	746,000	1.3/5.5
WCW Pro	1.2/5.1	740,000	N/A

Week Ending Aug. 22

Monday Night Raw	2.5/3.9	1.56 million	Pre-Empted
WCW Sat. Night	2.2/5.4	1.36 million	3.4/8.7
WCW Main Event	2.0/4.2	1.23 million	2.3/5.1
WCW Pro	1.6/7.0	987,000	1.5/6.6
WWF All-American	1.5/4.2	933,000	2.0/5.4
WWF Mania	1.1/4.1	684,000	1.4/5.5

Week Ending Aug. 28

WCW Sat. Night	2.4/5.8	1.48 million	2.8/6.6
WCW Main Event	2.3/5.3	1.42 million	2.4/4.9
WWF All-American	1.7/5.1	1.06 million	1.9/5.0
WCW Pro	1.4/6.0	864,000	1.6/6.9
WWF Mania	1.3/4.4	809,000	1.1/3.7

August Specials

Clash/Champions**	4.5/7.7	2.76 million	3.8/6.9
Sun. Night Slam**	2.8/4.5	1.74 million	2.9/4.8

* Comparisons to last year's WCW Power Hour

** Live telecast

THE SECOND QUARTER

SHOW	RTG/SHR	HOMES	1ST Q	YR AGO
Mon. Night Raw	3.2/4.7	1.97 m	3.1/4.8	2.8/4.3
WCW Sat. Night	2.1/5.3	1.32 m	2.5/4.9	2.0/5.0
WCW Main Event	1.9/4.0	1.15 m	2.1/4.0	1.9/4.4
WWF All-American	1.8/5.4	1.11 m	2.2/5.3	2.3/7.0
WCW Pro Wrestling	1.5/5.9	888,400	1.7/6.2	1.2/5.1
WWF Mania	1.2/4.2	709,000	1.4/4.1	1.0/3.5

The April-to-June story is one of better than last year but mostly down from the first quarter. Typically, ratings take a slight dive in the spring quarter over winter because of the switch to daylight time and more recreational activities for the audience in warmer-weather states.

The *Monday Night Raw* chapter is another upward climb from both winter quarter and 1993. *Raw* jumped a full 14 per cent over the spring of '93 and three per cent over the 3.1 for its January-March run. *Raw* led in every one of the 13 weeks of the quarter and, among the weekly shows, that string has been extended to 22 consecutive weeks as of the final weekend in August when its pre-emptions by the U.S. Open tennis tournament begin.

Ironically, the arrival of Hulk Hogan did not help the numbers for *WCW Saturday Night* in the spring, with the TBS flagship show only up five per cent from its disastrous spring of '93 and actually falling 16 per cent from its resurgent 2.5 during winter. However, the shares were up year-to-year from 5.0 to 5.3.

Everything else declined from the winter quarter, though the two morning shows registered increases from a year ago. *WCW Main Event* was flat from a year ago at 1.9 but dropped nine per cent from the first quarter. *WWF All-American* is showing the greatest signs of needing a temperature check, dropping 22 per cent from a strong 2.3 a year ago and 2.2 in the winter to a weak 1.8.

In the morning, *WCW Pro* was up 25 per cent over last year's *WCW Power Hour* spring figures, harking partly to its becoming a first-run show; *Mania*, though still dragging the rear, was up 20 per cent from a pitiful 1.0 a year ago.

THE AUGUST STORY

We saw a bit of erosion from last August on *Monday Night Raw*, dropping from a hot 3.2 last year. Part of the fall was credited to the *Summer Slam* Monday preview appearing under the *Raw* title. *WCW Main Event* was up slightly from last year, thanks to the one live telecast. But *Saturday Night* dipped from last August's strong 2.7, paced by the 3.4 for the Sting-Flair bout. However, the biggest decline came from the hemorrhaging *WWF All-American*, falling a whopping 24 per cent from last year's 2.1.

MATWATCH SUBSCRIPTIONS

U.S./CANADA: \$5 for 3 issues. One bonus issue for every 3-issue gift set. \$1.75 per single copy.

OVERSEAS: \$9 for 3 issues, \$3 per single copy.

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Slam: Good But Not Great

When the final accounting of the 1994 *Summer Slam* buy-rate is in next week, we'll know whether comedy and mystery sell better than brothers in cages. The *Matwatch '94* verdict on this year's spectacular: good but not great. From a television standpoint, the production was a standout effort with quality graphics, an extraordinary expense on special effects and excellent lighting in the new United Center. The announcing....well, that always seems to be another story on a WWF pay-per-view.

PRODUCTION ELEMENTS

One of the most difficult qualities to master when televising from a new building is lighting, particularly when yours is the first show to air from a venue. The balance between the ring lights and the crowd tones was excellent and demonstrated strong preparation.

Camera shots appeared to be well-planned and this area, which slid a bit during 1992 and early '93 appears to be helped by Titan scheduling fewer bouts on its pay-cable shows. The key shots of the night: Jim Neidhart clotheslining both Davey Boy and Diana Hart Smith and a Bret Hart suplex on Owen from near the top of the cage.

Graphics were sharp throughout and the only serious glitch was when Todd Pettengill's microphone shorted out a bit before his post-match interview with Owen and Neidhart. However, that foulup was brief.

PRODUCING

This is where substantial argument has developed. Whereas the elements of taped retrospectives of the key feuds were well-edited, the show order could have easily been rearranged.

Tag bouts, if action teams are featured, typically get a show and live crowd into a strong start; however, a pay-cable event always appears to launch with a downer when the opener is a disqualification finish, as was the case in Headshrinkers-Bigelow/I.R.S.

Considering the two offered about as much as could be presented for their talents, the Razor Ramon-Diesel Intercontinental title match could well have been a better curtain-raiser. The biggest difference of opinion has been over whether the Hart brothers' bout or the Undertakers' feud-settler should have been last.

From a pure wrestling standpoint, the WWF-rules cage matches are less appealing than the traditional NWA style because a decision decided simply on who can escape the cage first is like breaking a tie in a high school football game by giving each team four plays from the 20 to see how far they can penetrate. Plus, even as tremendous as the Harts were, in 32 minutes, they repeated too many of the same escape attempts.

Had Vince McMahon known how dead the crowd would be for the finale, he likely would have restructured the show; however,

we can't argue the choice as a finish, considering the Undertaker-Undertaker mystery was what sold this show. Having seen the results, the two closing matches should have been inverted.

ANNOUNCING

Last year, *Matwatch '93* rated Vince McMahon's performance the best of his career and awarded him our choice as the top announcer in the mat game. However, *Summer Slam* more than reconfirmed our belief McMahon has deteriorated back into his carnival-barker, obnoxious overkill style and may not even be in the industry's top three this year. He tried far too hard to sell the Undertaker bout when the crowd was obviously not into it.

When Jerry Lawler decides to hang up his ring tights, he has a silver-platter career behind the mike, possibly even as a play-by-play man. But on this show, Lawler was far too programmed by the producers to be a machine-gun joke book, suffering from what many have cited Bobby Heenan for on recent major WCW shows—going for the one-liners rather than analysis during the serious bouts. Surely, this was a decision of the producers because Lawler has too much foresight than to weaken his performance by being nothing but Don Rickles.

Overall, the evaluation of *Summer Slam* is good but not great with most of the weaker elements the show's structure and the mike work.

OVERALL GRADE: B

THE REAL WRESTLING HOTLINE

OPTION 1

DAVE MELTZER (M-W-F)

STEVE BEVERLY (Tu-Sa)

SCOTT HUDSON (Th)

RON LEMIEUX (Su)

1-900-903-9030

99 CENTS PER MINUTE

OPTION 2

MIKE MOONEYHAM (M)

SCOTT HUDSON (Tu)

RON LEMIEUX (W)

MACARTHUR/Skolnick (Th)

CRITIC-AT-LARGE (Fr)

Cody Boyns (Sa)

G. Makropoulos (Su)



The Best of August

1. Shane Douglas, ECW: "If you want to go to WCW, you can see Dusty Rhodes—who can wear a bra better than any man in wrestling." 2. Douglas, ECW: "I don't have to kiss up to Ted Turner or Eric Bischoff to be the greatest wrestler in the world." 3. Jerry Lawler, WWF Superstars, on Smoking Gunns: "They never got over Gunsmoke being canceled." 4. Terry Funk, WCW Worldwide, on Dusty & Dustin: "Do they think this is *Days of Our Lives*? Do they think this is Roseanne Barr?" 5. Tony Schiavone/Bobby Heenan, WCW Sat. Night: (TS) "Some organizations claim to be the first to be interactive. But you people know we were the first." (BH) "Some organizations can't even pay their phone bills." 6. Lawler, Summer Slam: (JL) "Does Helen Hart dye her hair or is it naturally blue?" 7. Lawler, SS, on Bruce Hart: "Couldn't Stu and Helen afford a normal-sized kid?" 8. Jim Ross, WWF Superstars, to Lawler: "I've heard you spent more time on canvas than Rembrandt." 9. Lawler/Ross, WWF: (JL) "Walter Payton ain't Shawn Michaels. You don't like my grammar?" (JR) "I don't like your grammar or your grandpa." 10. Schiavone, WWW: "(Dusty) said because of his involvement in corporate life, he had neglected Dustin."

11. Schiavone/Heenan, Sat. Night: (TS) "You can be whatever you want to be." (BH) "OK, you be Gordon Solie. I'll be Ted Turner." (TS) "What would you say to me?" (BH) "YOU'RE FIRED!" 12. Lawler, Superstars: "I've just finished the thinnest book in the world: *How I Learned to Wrestle* by the 1-2-3 Kid." 13. Ventura, Worldwide: "I think Terry Funk will die in the ring. Not now...maybe 20 years from now when he's 70." 14. Ventura, Worldwide: "We don't know what the Patriot's like under that mask. For all we know, he could be 53." 15. Schiavone/Ventura, Worldwide: (TS) "I'm surprised at J.J. Steele." (JV) "Tony, you're surprised at what you get in a box of cereal." 16. Lawler, Superstars, on Duke Droese: "He keeps messing with me and his teeth will be like the 10 Commandments—all broken." 17. Jamie Dundee, USWA, on Mephisto: "That's a loaded boot—not a birth defect." 18. Buddy Landell, USWA, on the Gilberts: "These guys wake up in the morning talking about who's given 'em the shaft." 19. Reggie B. Fine, USWA: "If I want your opinion, I'll give it to you." 20. Lance Russell, USWA: "Logic's not the only thing twisted in Sid." 21. Lance/Dave Brown, USWA: (DB) "We've got a title match today." (LR) "Really? I was gonna suggest we sit here and talk about your vacation."

Strongest Comments

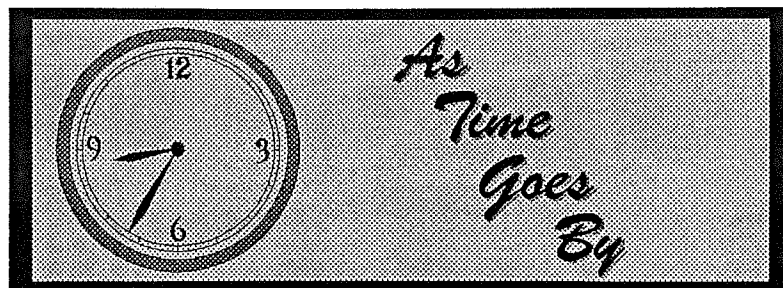
1. Randy Savage, Raw: "The Justice Department is just like Forrest Gump—stupid is as stupid does." 2. Douglas, ECW: "If you want WCW, you can have Ric Flair, a 50-year-old hasbeen, who can only yell, 'Wooooo!' 3. Ron Lemieux/Dave Meltzer/Russell, The Real Wrestling Hotline: (RL) "For somebody who's been in wrestling as long as Lex Luger, he just hasn't progressed." (DM) "Lance could probably tell you something about that." (LR) "I will...but I won't." 3. Meltzer/Steve Beverly, TRWH: (SB) "Vince McMahon is just too obnoxious for my tastes in play-by-play announcers." (DM) "Yeah? You should meet him."

And the Rest....

VIVID IMAGINATION AWARD - Sid Vicious, USWA: "I've never picked up a softball bat in my life."

JUMP-THE-GUN AWARD - Nick Bockwinkel, WCW: "The victory of Hulk Hogan over Ric Flair at *Bash-at-the-Beach* was the most-watched match in WCW history. (A little

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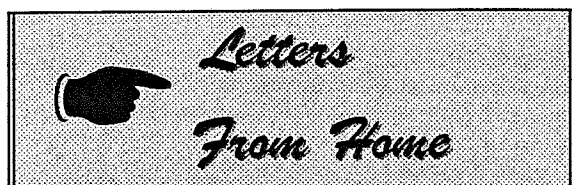


You'll never make me believe those Shane Douglas ECW interviews aren't coming right out of the script of Paul Heyman. Re: Shane's references to Ric Flair as a "50-year-old hasbeen." Heyman's old insult interviews would always refer to age (i.e.: David Crockett as a "44-year-old mental midget" and Jerry Lawler as a "42-year-old going through menopause.") ...Don't imagine Shane plans to go back to work in Atlanta any time soon....The Jim Crockett NWA Championship show was expected to start in six markets over Labor Day weekend with about six more scheduled on line at the end of the month....For dish owners who may have lost Channel America and American Independent Network for the nightly wrestling blocks, Channel America has moved to Satcom F2, Channel 1; AIN is now on Spacenet 4, Channel 8....WFLD, the Fox affiliate in Chicago, which carries WWF Superstars at noon Saturdays (EDT) will be on satellite by the time you read this and may be available on some cable systems around the country.

If you ask me, this whole thing over the NWA belt with Douglas renouncing it is predictably childish. For one thing, if the NWA consortium promoters agreed to Douglas as champion, Todd Gordon and Heyman should have abided by it; second, all of these promoters draw an audience which totals less than one-half of one per cent of the U.S., which makes the squabbling even further childish. Then, again, this is wrestling....Keep your eye open for the possibility of a major syndicator attempting to put together a package of regional promotions for national distribution some time in 1995....Paul MacArthur and Dave Skolnick of *Wrestling Perspective* have joined the roster of The Real Wrestling Hotline (1-900-903-9030) on alternate Thursdays on Option 2. Ron Lemieux has now added a second segment, *Ron Lemieux's Weekend Wrapup*, Sundays on Option 1.

The reason we don't include the two MTV Hulk Hogan-Roddy Piper WWF specials in the top all-time ratings (one scored a 9.4 and the other an 8.8) is that MTV was not in 20 million homes at the times of those shows, which is considered the parity threshold for the major cable networks in the mid-1980s....ECW may be tailor-made for the brutality fans in Philly and for a lot of you hardcores and I love the recent Funk and Douglas interviews. But I also find it the most gratuitously violent mat show on the air and I don't think there's a way in the world that show would ever succeed on a national basis....Ben Masters, on his Sept. 24 Peach State show with Abdullah the Butcher vs. Cactus Jack at a skating rink in Cordele, Ga.: "The reason we're moving this from the Armory is the skating rink doesn't charge you nearly as much when you tear up things."

The move of Eric Bischoff to replace Tony Schiavone on WCW Worldwide leads me to believe Bischoff would probably do the same thing if Schiavone departs from *Saturday Night*, rather than what he should do....I'm in agreement with those who feel doing TBS weekend shows live on a once-a-month basis and hyping the interactive portion is only going to help those shows and hurt the taped weeks because viewers will find those shows less special. They ought to go live every week or not at all....We have a bundle of new subscribers and we welcome all of you, including new folks from Canada, Japan and Estonia. In our next issue, we'll try to recapitulate a little bit about our publication and who we are. Please remember, a 3-issue gift subscription for someone else will earn you bonus issues....We'll have a second September issue to get us back on track. Since last we met, we've passed our 40th birthday. The bones aren't creaking yet. FSB.



You say Jim Cornette "has the talent to attract fans without resorting to racism." What if he doesn't. In the past year, SMW has launched such duds as Kendo, Prince Kharis and Bruiser Bedlam. Does Cornette think he can recycle himself vs. Bob Armstrong and the Rock & Roll Express until he's in Bob's slot?

Jeff Cohen
Bayside, N.Y.

So Vince walks. He said, "Like in wrestling, the good guys win." Unfortunately, in the U.S. justice system, the bad guys often get off.

Dore DeQuattro
Bayside, N.Y.

After seeing the two latest WCW live shows, I have to say that I was impressed. *WCW Saturday Night* was much better than the July 9 show. That (the July) show was an hour, so I knew everything would be rushed, including the main event—which it was—with two hours, I figured they would add too much to fill at the time. But the Saturday night show went by pretty fast.

Danny Bazarsky
West Haven, Ct.

(WRCB in Chattanooga) says (Jim) Crockett's NWA TV show would debut Sept. 3 at 1 a.m. and, for now, that would be the regular time.....so, locally, Crockett is already getting "bumped," which is frustrating, I'm sure, to him. I have doubts as to how well this group will do, or how long they'll last. I do wish them well, though. I hope they make it.

David Williamson
Cleveland, Tn.

(Especially good to renew the old acquaintance, David, and to receive those classic clippings from Georgia. You're right. Time periods and station lineups will be the barometer for Crockett's fate. FSB.)

To Concentrate on Radio

Ross Passes On WWF Extension

ATLANTA—Veteran announcer Jim Ross has opted not to accept an extension to his two-month contract with Titan Sports, which expired Labor Day.

Ross, who replaced Vince McMahon as host of *WWF Monday Night Raw* and *Superstars of Wrestling* during McMahon's federal trial in July and moved back to *Wrestling Challenge* in August, could not reach agreement on terms for a new deal extending into 1995.

Appearing on *The Joe Pedicino Wrestling Machine* in Atlanta Aug. 27, Ross announced his final appearance on *Challenge* would be that day. He told viewers the parting was amicable. Titan and Ross could not agree on the work schedule consistency he would have in commuting from his Atlanta home to Connecticut, which may have prevented him from accepting outside non-wrestling ventures.

Ross is preparing to premiere as host of a mainline sports/talk radio show on WGST-AM in Atlanta, current home of the Atlanta Braves and Atlanta Hawks. Much of the show will be focused on the Atlanta Falcons, for whom Ross was a color commentator in 1992. In a three-hour pilot in early August, Ross concentrated on call-ins about the baseball strike, the Falcons and University of Georgia football and fielded few wrestling questions.

In addition, Ross is also expected to join Bob Caudle as a co-host of *Smoky Mountain Wrestling* later this fall.

Two computer bulletin board services were full of speculation early last week about a reported "high-level" meeting at CNN Center regarding the future of Tony Schiavone as anchor for *WCW Saturday Night* and *Clash of the Champions* but, contrary to computer comments, Ross had not been contacted by World Championship Wrestling as of Aug. 31.

Tennessee Columnist Rips USWA Violence

(EDITOR'S NOTE: Jessalyn Bailey is an outspoken weekly columnist for *The Jackson (Tn.) Sun* who often generates a firestorm. We wanted to share her recent take on USWA wrestling.)

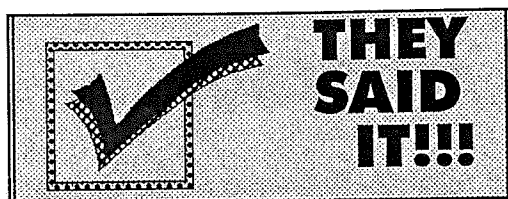
I am not a wrestling fan but my husband is and like many west Tennesseans, he watches USWA wrestling live on Saturday mornings. Like any good wife, I occasionally watch it with him. I'm still appalled and outraged over what we witnessed this past Saturday. Matter of fact, I phoned the station during the matches to vent my utter disgust to the operator on duty.

Anyone who follows wrestling even casually knows it is more of an entertainment spectacle than a sporting event. However, Saturday's TV program pushed my penchant for tolerance to the brink.

The wrestling industry has thrived on the good guys "doing in" the bad guys. For many of today's kids and adults, wrestling is the modern version of the old westerns. The Cisco Kid, Lone Ranger and Hopalong Cassidy have been replaced with Hulk Hogan, Lex Luger and, locally, with Jerry "the King" Lawler and Koko B. Ware.

Of course, one supposes that surely the adult fans recognize the gimmicks wrestling promoters use to lure large audiences, but what kind of messages are they sending to impressionable kids who laugh and jump with glee over wrestlers' antics?

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And the Rest....

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quick on the draw, there, Nick. No pay-per-view show has ever come close to being the most-watched in history. That didn't happen until the Hogan-Flair bout at the Clash.

ALL-CLICHE TEAM - 1. Schiavone, WCW Sat. Night (Aug. live edition), "...for crying out loud" (five times during the broadcast). 2. Gordon Solie, WCW Pro: "...close but no cigar." 3. Vince McMahon Jr., Summer Slam: "...close but no cigar." 4. Gorilla Monsoon, Wrestling Challenge, "...close but no cigar."

DREADED GLITCH AWARDS - 1. WMC-TV, for terrible technical phone setup during August phone hookup between Lance Russell and Jerry Lawler. 2. WWF, for brief audio loss during post-Hart Brothers match interview with Owen and Jim Neidhart. 3. WCW, for missing the key shot of the Arn Anderson turn live at *Bash-at-the-Beach*.

UNINTENTIONAL BLOOPER - Henry Holmes, *Clash of the Champions*: "We have already spoken to Mr. Bischoff and his staff at WCW and they have agreed Hulk will get the first available title shot." (Henry, you were being interviewed by Bischoff and WCW has never established with viewers Bischoff is executive vice president of the company).

TERRIBLE TASTE AND BOO AWARDS - Smoky Mountain Wrestling, for two Gangstas interviews: 1. New Jack, "When we move into a neighborhood, we're not scared of the Klan. We move in right next door to the Grand Wizard. 2. New Jack, "Are all you white people gonna riot when O.J. gets off."

CLASH BY QUARTERS

8:05	2.6/5.1
8:15	3.3/6.3
8:30	4.0/7.2
8:45	4.0/7.1
9:00	3.8/6.5
9:15	4.5/7.3
9:30	4.8/7.7
9:45	4.6/7.5
10:00	5.2/8.7
10:15	6.7/11.3

In an average quarter-hour, one TBS rating point equals 617,000 homes but the figure can fluctuate because of variations in the total viewing universe in a given hour.

Editorials

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If WCW desires to continue the current practice of using 900-number telephone voting for its main events on live shows as an interactive element, fine. It adds participation for the audience. But WCW should do as it did for its first live Saturday show in July and provide an independent accounting firm—not a TBS or WCW employee—to verify on-air the results and the total accurate call count should be revealed.

Likewise, the USA network should insist on the same for any 900 question polls used by the WWF on *Monday Night Raw*. Further, if McMahon and Co. want to continue with live phone-in questions on the pay-per-view preview specials, fine—even if the calls are screened. Call screening is used even on Larry King's show, though King has publicly denied it. But USA ought to inject Standards and Practices safeguards to ensure the calls are random and not setups from Titan Sports employees.

All of this is in the name of honesty. If professional wrestling is fiction, as it always has been, viewers are intelligent enough to deal with that. But when they are paying hard-earned money to have a voice in any program, their votes should be accurately reflected and all cable networks should be scrupulous in their demands on accuracy.

Jessalyn Bailey

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On this particular Saturday, I watched as J.C. Ice, a supposed hero for the teenagers, and his partner, Wolfie D., clobber their opponents with hub caps, much to the delight of the assembled studio audience.

Later, Brian Christopher, another heartthrob, and the Moondogs, who look as though they came out of a prehistoric twilight zone, proceeded to swing chairs across the backs of their foes, who had already applied boards and chains to Christopher and his buddies.

What astounds me is how Dave Brown, who is from Trenton and a respected weathercaster on WMC-TV, can stand there and appear to be bemused by all of this while expecting us to believe his credibility on the weather. Dave knows better and should disassociate himself from this embarrassing display.

Wrestling is wrestling, but this was far more. This was an attempt to pick up any standing item in that studio and use it as a weapon and who knows how many children are going to be entertained by this and try it on their friends? I think it's time the people at WMC-TV paid more attention to what they place on their air at the children's hour on Saturday mornings.

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